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ABSTRACT

The middle-level education initiative described in this document outlines an innovative program to assist New Mexico school districts in addressing the needs of early adolescents. Findings and recommendations that underscore the need for middle-level educational reform in New Mexico's schools are presented in this report. The state is a recipient of a Carnegie Corporation Grant and is currently participating in the Re: Learning project to improve educational opportunities for middle level students. A 1988 survey of New Mexico middle schools by the State Department of Education task force led to the formation of the Middle Level Education Advisory Committee, which prepared this document. The first section presents a call for action based on an agenda proposed by the Forum on Institutional Transitions and information from the Technical Assistance and Resource Center. The second section outlines desirable attributes of middle-level programs, including mission statement, program philosophy, role of students' developmental characteristics, organizational structure, curriculum, instruction, and staff development. A glossary, lists of task force and advisory committee members, alternative schedules for middle schools, a list of schools participating in the Carnegie grant, an exposition on teaming activities, and middle-level education survey results are included. (10 references) (LMI)

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Moving Into Action:

Middle Level Education In New Mexico

A Report For
The State Board Of Education

And

A Call For Action
From
The Middle Level Education
Advisory Committee

1991

EA 024 169

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VISION STATEMENT

The New Mexico State Department of Education believes the education of all students must become the mission for all New Mexicans. We believe education must challenge all students to reach their potential.

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PREFACE

This report presents findings and recommendations which underscore the compelling need and urgency for middle level educational reform in New Mexico schools. Nationwide data indicate an alarming number of students dropping out of school on an annual basis, emphasizing the fact that the nation's adolescents are generally at risk. The middle level experience may represent the last substantive educational experience for many of America's youth. Data presented in the report of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, TURNING POINTS, Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, and the State of California's middle level reform document, Caught in the Middle, highlight the critical aspects of the transitional years in our educational system. Both reports emphasize the uniqueness of the students, loss of human potential due to drop-outs, the lack of personal connections for students in the school culture and environment, and they stress the urgency for middle level reform movements which can reconcile the personal and academic challenges of this age group with their unique developmental characteristics.

The State of New Mexico is engaged, on a small scale, in the process of providing leadership for the restructuring of the school system. New Mexico is one of 27 states recently awarded a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York's Council on Adolescent Development. The purpose of the Carnegie Grant is to assist in the improvement of educational opportunities for middle level students in New Mexico. In addition to this involvement, New Mexico is also one of six states actively engaged in Re: Learning, a joint effort with the Education Commission of the States and the Coalition of Essential Schools. Both Carnegie and Re: Learning support the development and implementation of strategies which foster major school reform and imply a need for drastic change and the creation of a new vision for education. Currently, New Mexico is poised to take a leadership role in the development of a comprehensive model of change for middle level education.

Integral parts of the middle school movement preceded the restructuring movement, in both the state and nation. The Middle Level Education Advisory Committee encourages the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education to expand restructuring efforts in New Mexico specifically to the middle level educational

needs referred to in this report. Based on a review of the literature, experience with political change in education, and discussions with many knowledgeable people, it is time to revise middle level education in our state. Our state needs to build a shared vision of middle level education, organize schools on behalf of student learning, and create new working relationships and collaborative structures which exemplify our knowledge of best practices in middle level education.

In 1988 the New Mexico Department of Education appointed a task force to study and make recommendations concerning the future of middle level education in the state. Survey findings from schools serving middle level students in New Mexico and a list of recommendations were presented to the State Board of Education in 1989. Subsequently, the Middle Level Education Advisory Committee (MLEAC) was formed. The purpose of the MLEAC has been to prepare a definition of desirable middle level education programming for New Mexico, to present models for the education community and other communities to consider, and to present an action plan with a timeline for moving toward effective middle level schools within the state.

We wish to thank members of the Writing Subcommittee listed on page 34 for contributing their time, effort, and expertise to the preparation of this document.

Glossary of Relevant Terms

For this report to have the greatest impact, it is vital for the readers to share a common language. Following is a list of relevant terms which are specifically applied to middle level education.

Advisor-Advisee Program: Regularly scheduled times during which each student has the opportunity to interact with peers and staff about school-oriented and personal concerns. Both classified and licensed staff members become involved in general advising and guidance with students at the classroom level and recommend students with special needs to the counseling staff and/or parents for follow-up. (See **Counseling** and **Guidance**.)

Block Scheduling: Scheduling that provides large blocks of time in which individual teachers or teams of teachers can organize and arrange flexible groupings of students for varied periods of time. This allows teachers to plan for specific instructional needs without disrupting the schedule of the entire school. For example, this could allow a qualified teacher to teach English and social studies to a single class of students for the equivalent of two class periods. This doubles the time the teacher spends with each student.

Coalition of Essential Schools: This association of secondary schools and institutions of higher learning, established in 1984, is devoted to strengthening the learning of all students by redesigning each school's priorities and simplifying its structure. Participating schools agree to adhere to nine principles which focus on effective teaching and student learning.

Cooperative Learning: A teaching strategy that allows small groups of students to work together and share successes, although students are still evaluated and tested individually. Students are actively involved in the learning process. Cooperative learning stresses student cooperation rather than competition. It emphasizes positive interdependence, individual accountability, shared leadership, social skills, and group problem solving.

Core (academic) curriculum: This is the portion of the curriculum considered essential for every student, regardless of ability or future occupational plans. This translates into general education content, skills,

and information which all youth need to learn. In some middle level references, "core" is used interchangeably with "interdisciplinary," "integrated" or "fused" curriculum. For example, reading, mathematics and writing are integral parts of the core curriculum. (See the curriculum model in this report.)

Counseling: Assistance given to students by specially trained and licensed school personnel, varying from career counseling to crisis intervention (not to be confused with **Guidance** or **Advisor-Advisee Program**).

Exploratory Curriculum: Curriculum experiences designed to help youngsters explore their aptitudes, changing needs, and interests. These include experiences in the core curriculum, special interest areas which may be part of the core curriculum, and purely interest-centered experiences. (See the curriculum model in this report.)

Guidance: Assistance given to young adolescents by all school personnel, as in **Advisor-Advisee Programs**, to help students emerge from adolescence as successful adults (not to be confused with **Counseling**).

Heterogeneous Grouping: A grouping strategy which does not divide learners into groups based on their ability, learning achievement, or physical characteristics. It is used in programs in which students can learn together even though they have wide ranges of ability or levels of achievement.

Homogeneous Grouping: A grouping strategy which usually divides students into groups organized around specific levels of ability and/or achievement. It is used in programs in which having students with similar levels of ability can increase student learning, such as special education, gifted and talented education, and competitive performing groups.

Interdisciplinary Teaching/Curriculum: Instructional programs that combine subject matters ordinarily taught separately (such as history, literature or science) under a single organizational structure, utilizing two or more teachers representing different subject areas. The team of teachers shares the same students, schedule, areas of the school and occasionally the responsibility for teaching more than one subject. This utilizes **Block Scheduling** techniques and puts curriculum planning, grouping, and scheduling decisions in the hands of the team of

teachers who are aware of the changing instructional needs of the students.

Mentoring: Pairing of students with adults or other students in order to foster success in school or work.

New Mexico Academy of School Leaders: Housed at the University of New Mexico and directed by Dr. David Colton, this is a statewide program to address the needs of at-risk students.

Peer Tutoring: This is the planned use of students in a tutorial role. Students who have learned successfully help students who have not yet succeeded in a particular area. The knowledge and skills of both students are enhanced by this process.

Professional Standards Commission: This group of educators serves as an arm of the State Board of Education, making recommendations concerning the professional licensure of educators and the approval of educator preparation programs at the state's colleges and universities.

School-Within-A-School, Teams, Family Structure: Also known as houses, clusters, or pods, these grouping strategies are designed to reduce the impact of large numbers of students in a single school by dividing students into sub-schools or little schools, each with its own faculty. The major objective of the school-within-a school is successful transition from the self-contained, single-teacher classroom found in many elementary schools to the larger departmentalized school environment in secondary schools.

Young Adolescence: The developmental stage youngsters experience as they approach and begin to enter puberty, usually occurring between ten and fifteen years of age.

Section I:

Call for Action

Call for Action: Policy makers in New Mexico education must provide immediate leadership and support for the transition of middle level education from its current status to the one envisioned by the literature, by the restructuring movement, and by the Middle Level Education Advisory Committee. Fundamental changes must be in place within five years. Through a major public relations effort, all New Mexicans shall become aware that concerted effort is being made to change middle level education.

Levels at which change needs to occur are (1) the State Department of Education; (2) university preservice, graduate, and inservice programs; and (3) school district organizations and school buildings serving early adolescents.

Transitions needed at the State Department of Education:

At the level of the State Department of Education the following activities should occur:

The Professional Standards Commission should include a middle level advocate, and a review of licensure requirements should be made, taking into account standards required by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

A specialist in middle level education should be hired into a consultant position.

Educational standards developed for the state need to incorporate best practices for middle level education and should be explicit in identifying the ways middle level programs differ from either elementary or high school programs.

Transitions needed within teacher preparation colleges and universities:

Universities need to develop methods of preparing teachers, and for renewing existing teachers, so our middle schools can be staffed with the expertise specific to their purposes. University preservice plans should include intensive training in early adolescent development, in methods and management activities adapted to the age level, and in curriculum elements of the middle school. Clinical experience geared to middle level pedagogy should be required. Means of achieving multiple content area endorsements should be made clear, and either strongly suggested or required for a middle level endorsement, whether the

teacher is licensed at the elementary or secondary level. National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education standards for middle level teacher preparation must be met.

Teachers at the middle grade level who are already teaching must be provided, either through university outreach programs or district inservice, with updated teaching information, specific to the middle level. This information should cover the same elements as the preservice teacher preparation curriculum, namely early adolescent development, method and management adaptations, organizational structures, and the basics of effective middle level schools. Building administrators also need specific information on the organizational structure, curricula, and philosophy of effective middle level schools.

Transitions needed within school districts and middle level programs:

Within districts and buildings, plans must be made to incorporate changing notions on how best to serve middle level learners. School boards should adopt a philosophy of middle level education and require school sites to write mission statements and to undertake a full review and revitalization of middle level programs.

As principals and teachers confer on building goals and on individual professional development plans, efforts must be focused so that within a five-year timeframe every educator in New Mexico who works with middle level learners will be fully cognizant of and committed to the practices of effective programs for middle level learners. Districts need to provide middle level practitioners with support and resources necessary to the task. School districts and universities should form alliances to distill and transmit to practitioners the fundamental information and processes necessary for transforming middle level educational services.

Forum On Institutional Transitions

We call for a Forum on Institutional Transitions, **with representatives of the State Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, New Mexico Youth Authority, the Professional Standards Commission, the Commission on Higher Education, institutions of teacher preparation, and middle level practitioners, for the purpose of developing a collaborative model tying all agencies together in efforts to effect the transition of New Mexico middle level education from its current status to a renewed, invigorated and more effective form.**

The purpose of this forum will be to develop a referendum for change in middle level education among a critical mass of policy makers within the state. Three critical activities of the forum are to:

- 1. Create among the participants a common base of knowledge about middle level education;
- 2. Develop concrete and explicit plans for institutional change within the state to occur within five years; and
- 3 Provide criteria for assessing the successful implementation of plans developed during the Forum on Institutional Transitions.

Outcome of Forum: Within five years, all school districts will adopt a plan for implementation of a middle level program and incorporate assessment procedures to compile data which lead to improved curricula, instructional programs, and more effective student support services.

Suggested Components of Assessment

1. The state will develop and implement a five-year plan with annual indicators of progress.

2. Standardized data-gathering procedures/assessment program will be developed during the Forum on Institutional Transitions. Data will be collected to show:

   a. Evidence of linkages between service agencies,
   b. Evidence of adapted organizational structures,

c. Evidence of staff development activities,
d. Evidence of professional growth of staff,
e. Evidence of interdisciplinary curricula,
f. Evidence of fully developed core curricula,
g. Evidence of program development, involving (and revolving around) community and family,
h. Involvement of the business community,
i. A statement of philosophy,
j. A comparison with the 1988 survey data,
k. A budget analysis to highlight cost effectiveness,
l. Resource allocation,
m. Utilization of a Technical Assistance and Resource Center, and
n. Ethnicity and socio-economic breakdown.

3. A Technical Assistance and Resource Center within the state will be fully operational and maintained during the five-year implementation period. The Resource Center will provide assistance to school districts to develop and use non-traditional assessment practices designed to evaluate middle level learning outcomes.

Model for self assessment of middle level programs:

Program Assessment

The North Central Association assists local schools to define and evaluate themselves in terms of program components. The initial task of the local school is to define a mission statement and a coherent philosophy by which the school will operate. Broad categories are suggested for analysis that together will form the gestalt in which the school operates. It is the school's statement of mission and belief which establishes the framework of operation for the school. The broad categories which will be described assist in the establishment of quality programs as well as a mechanism for on-going school improvement activities. The North Central Association activity is one which can be conducted by the Technical Assistance Center in coordination with the New Mexico office of the North Central Association Commission on Schools. The model has been in place for over a hundred years and is used extensively in school districts in New Mexico and nineteen other states. Aspects of self-study to be conducted by the individual school are:

1. **Statement of philosophy and objectives;**
2. **Assessment of quality of staff;**
3. **Assessment of organizational climate;**
4. **Analysis of program of studies (breadth and nature of offerings);**
5. **Analysis of quality, rigor, and appropriateness of program of studies;**
6. **Analysis of instructional process (the stress on the learning to learn);**
7. **Analysis of the psychological environment of the school;**
8. **Analysis of the quality of human interaction within the school;**
9. **Analysis of educational technology in place;**
10. **Fiscal support of educational program;**
11. **Analysis of potential change;**
12. **Analysis of community and student perceptions of the school;**
13. **Analysis of the school within the context of the district; and**
14. **Identification and evaluation of desired student outcomes.**

Technical Assistance and Resource Center

Call for Action: Funding shall be sought to establish and maintain a Resource Center to collect and disseminate information and to provide technical assistance to schools.

An initial phase of the Resource Center has been funded through the Carnegie Grant and will link nine identified middle schools through a computer network. Additional funding must be secured to support and promote extended statewide services for the purpose of implementing the plans developed during the Forum on Institutional Transitions. Envisioned are the dissemination of resource materials, coordination of staff development through regional inservices, and the networking of services from youth development authorities, education, health, human services, and other support agencies.

The Technical Assistance and Resource Center would provide services by:

1. Supporting schools and districts as they change from the traditional junior high model to the middle level philosophy described here.
2. Encouraging study phases involving community, teachers, administration, and school boards.
3. Providing awareness programs to school districts in all components of middle level education, and coordinating programs that any other outside agency may provide; e.g., services offered by the State Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, and the New Mexico Youth Authority.
4. Implementing workshops to educate various school communities in all aspects of middle level education.
5. Guiding school districts in planning steps for a sequential implementation of effective middle level schooling.
6. Establishing a computer-based communication system offering basic services such as electronic mail, bulletin boards, database access, and teleconferencing.
7. Serving as a public relations information center for school boards, communities, and school sites.

Section II:

Desirable Attributes of Middle Level Programs

Mission Statement

Attribute: Each middle level program, each local school board, and each educational institution in New Mexico shall write a mission statement concerning middle level education.

Meeting the mission of middle level education means modifying and refocusing educational institutions across the state. Middle level programs will serve their students more effectively when an understanding of the characteristics of good middle level schooling permeates New Mexico's communities. A resource available to those writing a mission statement for middle level education is Developing a Mission Statement for Middle Level Education, published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

MODEL: (From recommendations of the Middle-Level Education Task Force to the State Board of Education, June, 1989)

The mission of middle level education in New Mexico is to provide programs and activities relevant to the unique psychological, sociological, physical and intellectual needs and characteristics of the students we serve.

Philosophy

Attribute: Each school community shall develop a statement of philosophy relating to the education of their middle level students.

Results of the 1988 survey show that 63% of the 86 schools responding to a state task force survey indicated that the schools had statements of philosophy addressing specific needs of middle level students. However, only 36% of the school districts responding indicated that the district had a statement of philosophy.

The philosophy emerges from the shared convictions of the students, administrators, teachers, counselors and community. An effective middle level school can function only with a strong model of participatory management which empowers teachers, students, and parents. Components of a middle level school philosophy should be a description of characteristics of adolescence, and a statement concerning the academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs of early adolescents.

MODELS:

> We believe that Berea Middle School should provide successful experiences for every child. Each child is a unique being and should be given opportunities to develop to his or her potential mentally, physically, and socially so he or she may become a productive, creative, responsible member of society in a changing world.
>
> Berea Middle School--Berea, South Carolina

> The middle school is a completely different educational structure from the elementary or senior high school. The middle school's uniqueness is not primarily that of the organization of courses, grouping, schedules, staffing, or materials; it is a matter of the focus and spirit of the whole operation.
>
> Northside-Blodgett Middle School--Corning, New York

Role of Developmental Characteristics

Attribute: Developmental characteristics are central to decision-making in an effective middle level program.

Middle level students, typically between ages 10-15, are passing through the most traumatic growth period of their lives other than infancy. This time is a trial for students emotionally, physically, and socially. In addition, students are affected by conditions in society which place them at risk. An educational program addressing all aspects of growth is necessary to prepare students for success.

Students in middle grades tend to be inwardly focused with extreme emotional swings between high and low and marked by uncertainty as to their places in the world. Physical changes may leave students unable to handle tasks which have been easy, leading to more emotional swings. A middle level school must develop programs which allow students to find an understanding of their emotional growth and the opportunity to express themselves.

The range of physical diversity among middle level students is greater than at any other stage of development. Wide differences can also lead to feelings of insecurity. Schools should enable students to understand the physical changes occurring in their bodies and the reasons for such a wide range of physical diversity. Learning activities should concentrate on hands-on experiences which allow students to gain confidence in coordination.

Socially, students are attempting to live in two worlds--the world of the child and the world of the adult. Without a range of experiences to draw on, students have a difficult time making decisions which will serve them well. The middle level program should include a variety of social experiences which allow students to learn and practice social skills, and personal development should be a part of the curriculum.

Model for addressing developmental needs:

In <u>What is a Middle School--Really?</u> Paul George lists essential components to address developmental needs:

Advisor-advisee program	Block schedule
Interdisciplinary organization	Team areas
Skills through exploration	Activities

Organizational Structure

Attribute: Districts and schools serving early adolescents shall develop and implement organizational structures characteristic of effective middle level programs.

Middle level organizational patterns should be dynamic, alterable, and always subordinate to the changing requirements of students and faculty (Caught in the Middle, page 107). Administrators should ensure that the concept of team organization characterizes and permeates the structure of the middle grades. Structures should include interdisciplinary team teaching and flexible or block-of-time schedules with team members sharing a common planning time.

Organizational structures and change must be determined first by the need for effective student learning. The goal of improving learning for all middle level students must be the predominant criterion for choosing the organizational structure for operating schools. Collaboration, shared leadership, mutual responsibility, and creativity should characterize new partnerships, both within and among schools, with surrounding communities, and with all other systems serving middle level youth. Relationships among all parties involved should promote high standards, innovation, and creativity to ensure access to excellence for all students.

There are no absolute answers as to how good schools should be organized or structured, but research indicates that good middle level schools have a set of common organizational characteristics. Suggested models for scheduling and teaming are included in the supplements at the end of this publication.

According to Elliot Y. Merenbloom, "Strategies for Implementing Effective Middle Level School Programs," Schools in the Middle, NASSP December, 1982, an effective middle level setting:

- Features a program that responds to the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral needs of the early adolescent learner.

- Possesses a definite curriculum plan that includes factual information or organized knowledge, skills, and personal development activities that are correlated with each other on a formal basis.

- Builds on the successes of elementary education and in turn prepares pupils for a successful experience in the senior high school.

- Employs teachers who can focus on the learning needs of pupils by using a variety of teaching techniques that actively involve pupils.

- Organizes teachers into interdisciplinary and/or disciplinary teams using block-of-time and modular scheduling techniques to better implement the instructional program.

- Recognizes the importance of effective education by providing for a home-base or teacher/adviser program, stressing the importance of self-concept in the curricular as well as the cocurricular program, and working as a staff to provide a positive climate for learning.

- Promotes flexibility in the implementation of the daily, weekly, and monthly schedule of classes and activities to best meet the unique and varying needs of the students.

- Emphasizes the guidance and counseling function of each member of the staff in the daily implementation of the curricular and cocurricular programs by demonstrating a genuine concern for the welfare of each student.

- Evaluates the program on a regular basis and makes those changes that enhance the learning process.

Model of effective organizational structure:

Wiles and Bondi state that "All middle schools consist of five variables: students, teachers, time, space, and media. The skillful manipulation of these variables allows the middle school to provide the program and organization necessary for the diverse group of students they serve." Appropriate manipulation of these variables would include:

- **Student centeredness;**
- **Commitment to high expectations;**
- **Student-teacher relationships are cooperative;**
- **Academic requirements balanced with physical and social needs;**
- **Use of extended instructional time blocks;**
- **Flexible schedule;**
- **Interdisciplinary teaching teams in the core;**
- **Instructional areas or options provided;**
- **Collaborative teaching;**
- **Group guidance/advisor-advisee option;**
- **"School-within-a-school"/family groups prevail;**
- **Instruction organized in blocks of time;**
- **Team teachers have common planning time;**
- **Equal student access to all exploratory programs;**
- **Implementation of an "active learning" philosophy;**
- **Collaborative models with community;**
- **Integration of nursing, health, and social services; and**
- **Emphasis on heterogeneous grouping.**

Curriculum

Attribute: The curriculum of middle level education shall be oriented around the developmental stages of early adolescence and shall focus on the integration of personal and social themes.

Core curriculum for the middle level program should be defined broadly, and must include curricular components in academic disciplines, skill areas, character, and social development.

In moving toward the 21st century, practitioners at the district and school building levels are confronted with an immense challenge of creating and implementing a vision of excellence for the children of New Mexico. There is a growing realization that the world of the future will be vastly different from the present, that it will demand new kinds of people, and that the time is short to prepare the citizens of the future. Hence, efforts are underway to develop and implement a curricular structure that meets the needs of the future and attends to the needs of the many at-risk children in our middle level schools.

Curriculum development projects at the local level should include teachers, students, community representatives, and administrators. John Goodlad and other advocates of local empowerment stress that issues about "what" to teach should be resolved as close to the school and classroom levels as possible, dictated by the needs of students rather than by bureaucratic mandates. Theodore Sizer, chairperson of the Coalition of Essential Schools, believes that every community and every school is necessarily different from every other. Hence, each school should shape ideas about intellectual development and personalization of curriculum within the context of the local situation.

General education is interpreted in the context of the developmental concerns of early adolescents and the social issues that they will and do face. Early adolescence is a distinct stage in human development; therefore, the curriculum should be based on the characteristics of that stage and reflect developmentally appropriate themes. Organizing the curriculum in this way repositions important subject matter rather than eliminating or ignoring it and promotes the development of a wide array of skills.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development document, TURNING POINTS: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, calls for a middle level core curriculum characterized by the following components:

- Teaching young adolescents to think critically,
- Teaching young adolescents to develop healthful lifestyles,
- Teaching young adolescents to become active citizens,
- Integrating subject matter across disciplines, and
- Teaching students to learn as well as test successfully.

Implementation of this core curriculum implies that students confront themes--clusters of subjects--and learn to inquire, associate, and synthesize across subjects. Individual schools can choose the most important principles and concepts within each subject and focus instruction on appropriate personal and social issues.

Broad outlines of the curriculum are the responsibility of the state and local school authorities. However, the following suggested core curricula should be represented in a quality middle level program:

- Reading/literature;
- Technical and computer literacy;
- Social studies;
- Health/physical education (wellness education);
- Science/environmental education;
- Mathematics;
- Vocational/career education;
- Exploratory/enrichment courses;
- Study, organization, and listening skills; and
- Advisor-advisee/guidance component.

Curriculum integration and interdisciplinary instructional approaches are a response to the desire to make curriculum socially relevant and personally meaningful. If knowledge is to be important and relevant to students growing up in a contemporary society, there must be a departure from traditional forms of organization. Exploration of topics of crucial social and personal concern requires an

interdisciplinary approach to curricular organization. The Carnegie Colloquium on General Education suggests that such patterns of curricular organization assist the student in relating coursework to out-of-school experiences.

MODEL: The curricular model presents students linking their experiences with the experiences of their teachers to create learning activities around themes which reflect personal and social issues, using subject matter areas as connectors and unifiers of the experiences. Subject matter can also evolve from traditional as well as community resources. Learning is action-oriented to provide students with a base of experience for further learning in school and the community. The teacher role shifts from initiating instruction to cooperatively planning and facilitating it with students.

James Beane further defines necessary skill development components for the middle level school as the provision for:

Reflective thinking: Focusing on critical and creative skills with an emphasis on meanings and consequences of ideas and behaviors;
Problem solving: including problem finding and analysis;
Self-concepting and self-esteeming: Describing and evaluating personal aspirations, interests, and other characteristics;
Social action skills: Acting upon problem situations both individually and collectively;
Culture-based skills: Searching for completeness and meaning in such areas as cultural diversity; and
Valuing skills: Identifying and clarifying personal beliefs and standards upon which decisions and behaviors are based.

Instruction

Attributes:

Learners rather than subject matter are the center of instructional decision-making.

The duty of the school is to provide success for each learner. A commitment should be made to provide for each learner individually, through a wide use of learning activities and materials, and the creation of warm, exciting learning environments.

Developing higher-order thinking skills is a critical part of instructional processes.

Typically, middle level schools are centered on the child rather than on the subject matter. Interdisciplinary instructional models form the centerpiece of curriculum organization. Interdisciplinary teaching teams, generally comprised of two to five teachers, form smaller communities for learning, or "family units," in which students and adults can get to know each other well enough to create a climate for intellectual and personal development based on a shared educational purpose. The model of creating smaller communities for learning, forming teachers and students into teams, and the assignment of adult advisors to each student should form the framework for curriculum development and implementation for the middle level program.

Classrooms for middle level learners require teaching and management methods oriented comprehensively around the developmental needs of early adolescent learners. Teachers must plan learning activities with an awareness that each student in the room is functioning uniquely, with some combination of learning style, stage of intellectual growth, capacity for abstraction, need for physical release, and social self-awareness that is entirely different from that of every other student in the room.

Teachers must understand that success in school is essential for students to develop self-concepts of academic success. If the student begins to think of himself or herself as a success at school, a self-

fulfilling prophecy comes into being. If students are failing at this stage, the cause may be motivational, developmental, or due to poor learning habits. With encouragement, any of these can be remedied. The middle level learner needs encouragement more than any other gift the teacher can give. Middle level teachers need to organize the class in a variety of ways that give different learners a chance to succeed. Some learners are more successful in cooperative or collaborative arrangements, and should be given many opportunities to function within these arrangements, all the while being held accountable for their own personal learning and for the success of the group in accomplishing the group task.

However, since our society is very competitive, all students also need to learn how to compete, and how to gain success in competitive situations. A philosophy of competition is important to stress to this age level. Early adolescents are just beginning to learn that effort is linked to success. For example, in competitive situations students might tend to think that fortune or natural talent always predicts the winner, and decline to compete because "I'm not any good at this." Middle level learners still believe the locus of control is external; in good middle level classrooms they begin to understand that it is internal. Teachers can help students begin to learn how much control is gained from effort by helping them to see that winning stems from practice or effort as often as from good luck, and that even people who don't start out being "good" at something can become good at it, with effort.

Of particular interest to the middle level teacher will be ways to manage a classroom with plenty of active learning going on. Teachers must let students move about, interact, be productive--yet still maintain an orderly learning environment. Administrators promoting the concept of middle level education will want to provide their teachers with training needed in the area of classroom management for active learning.

Cognitive development during early adolescence is not on hold. A goal in choosing curricula and teaching methods in the middle grades should be the discipline of early adolescent minds, particularly their capacity for active, engaged thinking.

In the core curriculum, the student confronts themes and learns to inquire, associate, and synthesize across subjects. Teachers will be asked to practice learning techniques that allow students to participate actively in learning, to discover and create new solutions to problems.

Learning often takes place best when students have opportunities to discuss, analyze, express opinions, and receive feedback from peers. Peer involvement is especially critical during early adolescence when the influence of peers increases and becomes more important to the young person.

Staff Development

Attribute: Educational institutions in the state shall enter into a collaborative effort to design, develop, and deliver appropriate staff development and inservice activities for middle level educators in the state.

Middle level leaders in the 1990s must continue to stress the importance of initial preparation of quality middle level teachers and administrators through the development of preservice teacher preparation programs. In addition, administrative training programs need to be initiated to reflect the philosophy and needs of the middle level. The present void in preparatory programs for middle level teachers and administrators results in the inappropriate assignment to middle level schools of people trained for elementary or high schools.

Currently there is no provision for licensure or endorsement specifically for middle level educators in the state of New Mexico. The State Department of Education has no coordinating unit to provide leadership for the growth of middle level education in the state, and no preservice teacher preparation program is available at any of the institutions of higher education in the state, as well as no administrator training program, and little structured and planned inservice for practicing middle level professionals. In a 1988 survey of middle level schools conducted by the Middle Level Education Task Force, 81% of respondents reported that their teaching staffs would benefit from specific college courses and staff development activities in middle level education.

General standards for licensing middle level educators were proposed by the National Middle School Association (NMSA) in 1986. Based on these essential elements, the NMSA has developed criteria for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Beginning in 1992, it is expected that all middle level teacher education programs must meet NMSA/NCATE criteria. Teacher education institutions must have middle level preservice programs in place for their next cycle of NCATE accreditation.

Middle school teachers and administrators, more than any other factor, hold the key to effective middle level education in New Mexico. The professional preparation of teachers should include specialized knowledge of the core curriculum, a broad range of instructional

strategies which relate to active learning, and a comprehensive knowledge of the developmental characteristics of young adolescents (Caught in the Middle, p. 118).

The New Mexico Academy for School Leaders, directed by Dr. David Colton, is currently engaged in a statewide program to address the needs of at-risk students. The restructuring process being used by the Academy has implications for the implementation of quality middle level programs in New Mexico. A site-based training model which focuses on the development of leadership cadres to provide planning for the implementation of fundamental change at the building and community levels is entering its second year of operation. The premise of school personnel operating as teams within the school and community, not as isolated individuals, has direct implications for restructuring middle level curriculum in New Mexico. This process is attuned to the unique features of individual schools and empowers local school and community personnel to create organizational change.

MODELS:

Teacher/Administrator Preparation

Institutions of higher education, the State Department of Education, local school districts, individual schools and communities should initiate collaborative efforts to develop cadres of middle level educators and administrators.

Program emphasis should be placed upon "human skills" which foster effective teacher/administrator/student interaction and develop a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of the middle level curriculum.

Institutions of higher education should develop preservice programs which provide early field experience options for students interested in middle level education.

Institutions of higher education should develop and implement teacher induction and mentoring models for middle level professionals.

Strengthen the licensing of principals by including the same academic requirements required of teachers but with additional emphasis placed on planning, organizing, and scheduling the middle school.

Staff Development/Inservice

All professional personnel should participate in a comprehensive, locally planned and developed program of professional growth which emphasizes collegiality.

Staff development activities might include: defining school philosophy, planning curriculum, learning about adolescent characteristics, interdisciplinary teaming, developing collaborative teaching styles, or designing active learning environments.

Delivery models:

Site-based workshops

Summer institutes

Establishment of a statewide Resource Center

Developing regional demonstration schools

Developing graduate programs at the universities in middle level education

Administrative leadership institutes

CONCLUSION

The middle level education initiative established in this document outlines a bold and aggressive program to assist school districts in the State of New Mexico to address the needs of early adolescents.

The call for action presented in this document, beginning with the Forum on Institutional Transitions, needs to be given high priority by the education, health, and social service agencies of the state, and fully supported by local communities and the Legislature.

This document outlines a vital agenda for middle level education in New Mexico.

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SUPPLEMENTS

Middle Level Education Advisory Committee (1990-1991)

Writing Subcommittee of Middle Level Education Advisory Committee

Middle Level Education Task Force (1988-1990)

Alternative Schedules for Middle Schools

Carnegie Corporation Grant Middle Level Schools in New Mexico

Exposition on Teaming Activities

Middle Level Education Survey Results

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Supplement:

Alternative Schedules for Middle Schools

Taken from The Essential Middle School, Wiles and Bondi, Merrill: 1981, pages 148-153.

"In figures 5.6-5.11, the reader will find a number of examples of master building schedules that help organize the instructional day. While schedules, too, come in many forms, they generally tend to be designed to increase flexibility in the use of time. Short duration modules (mods) are used as the basic unit of time."

Figure 5.6
Block Schedule—Enrichment and Remediation Period

6	7	8
8:00-8:10	HR	1976-1977
8:10	8:10	8:10 A B
Basic Studies 90	Basic Studies 190	Related Arts & PE 90
9:40	11:20	9:40
9:40 A B Related Arts & PE 60	11:20 Lunch 30	9:40 Basic Studies 125
11:00	11:50	11:45
11:00 Lunch 30	11:50 Basic Studies 25	11:45 Lunch 30
11:30	12:15	12:15
11:30 Basic Studies 45	12:15 ENRICHMENT & REMEDIATION 45	12:15
12:15	1:00	1:00
1:00 Basic Studies 90	1:00 A B Related Arts & PE 90	1:00 Basic Studies 90
2:30	2:30	2:30

Figure 5.8
Organization Model for 45–15 Year-Round School—Three Tracks in School 45 Days—One Track Out for 15 Days

MASTER SCHEDULE

TIME	MODULE	TRACK A	TRACK B	TRACK C	TRACK D
8 15- 8 30	1	HR	HR	HR	HR
8 30- 8 45	2	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC	MUSIC ART BAND PRE VOC PE ACADEMIC PLANNING	ACADEMIC
8 45- 9 00	3				
9 00- 9 15	4				
9 15- 9 30	5				
9 30- 9 45	6				
9 45-10 00	7		MUSIC ART BAND PRE VOC PE ACADEMIC PLANNING	ACADEMIC	
10 00-10 15	8				
10 15-10 30	9				
10 30-10 45	10				
10 45-11 00	11				
11 00-11 15	12		ACADEMIC		LUNCH
11 15-11 30	13				
11 30-11 45	14	LUNCH			MUSIC ART BAND PRE VOC PE ACADEMIC PLANNING
11 45-12 00	15				
12 00-12 15	16	ACADEMIC	LUNCH		
12 15-12 30	17				
12 30-12 45	18		ACADEMIC	LUNCH	
12 45- 1 00	19				
1 00- 1 15	20	MUSIC ART BAND PRE VOC PE ACADEMIC PLANNING		ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC
1 15- 1 30	21				
1 30- 1 45	22				
1 45- 2 00	23				
2 00- 2 15	24				
2 15- 2 30	25	ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY
2 30- 2 45	26				
2 45- 3 00	27				

Figure 5.9
Riviera Middle School Time Schedule

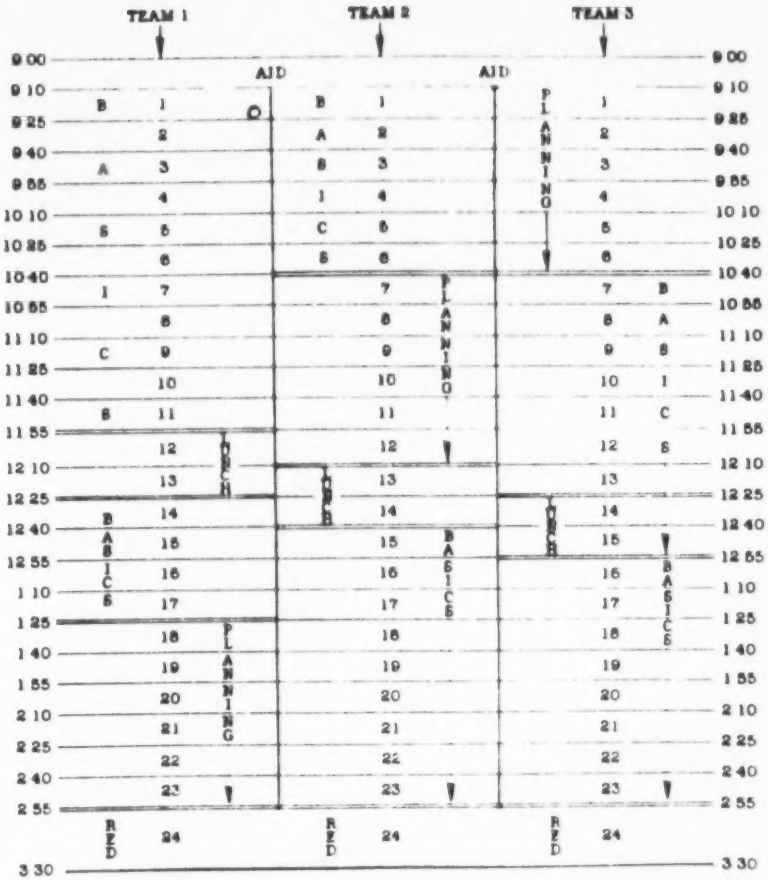

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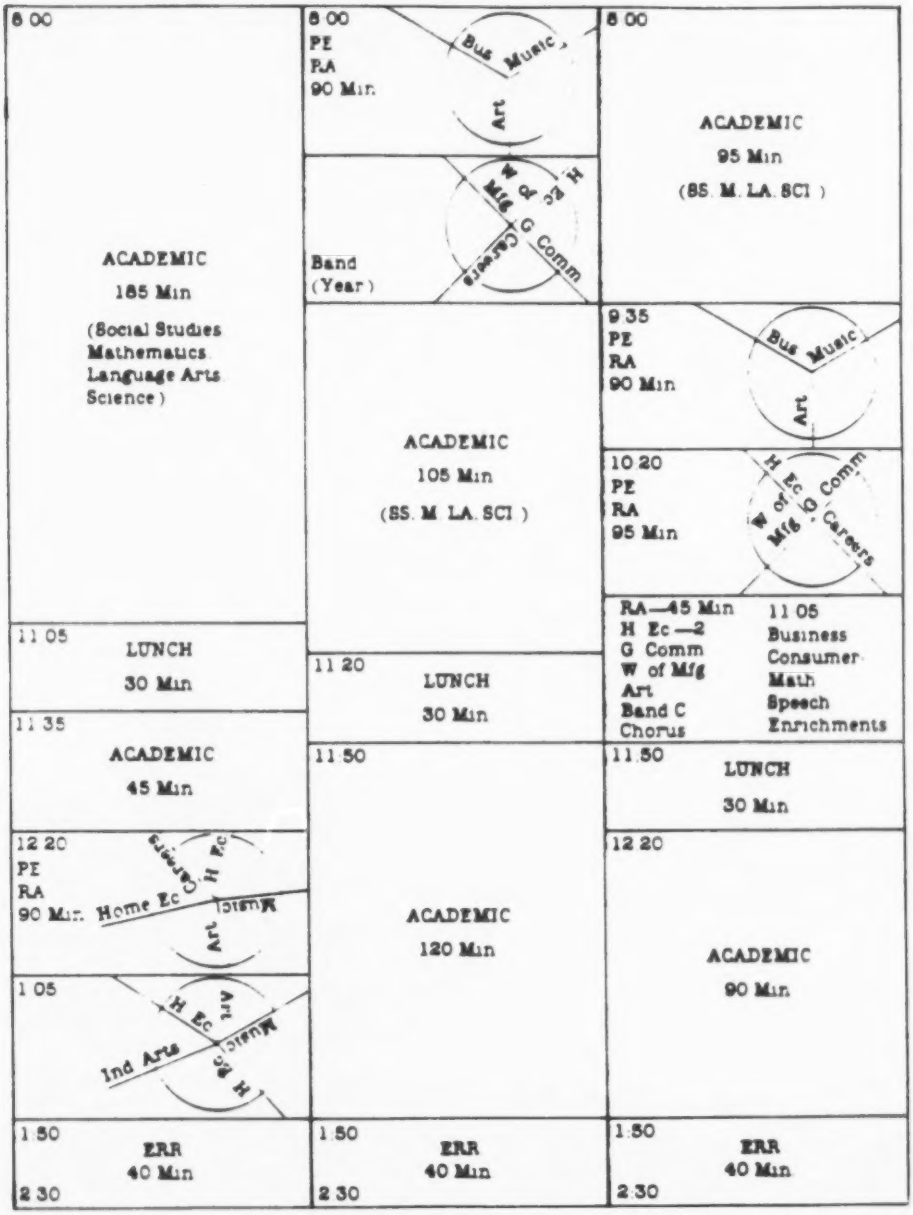
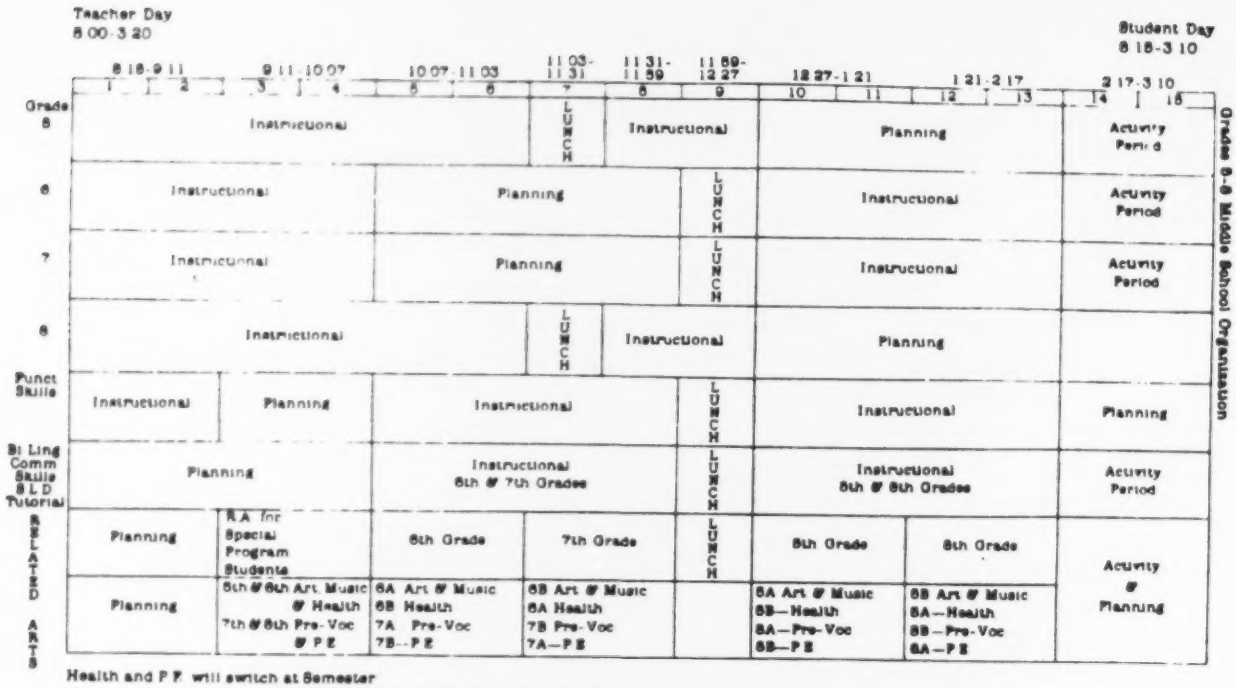
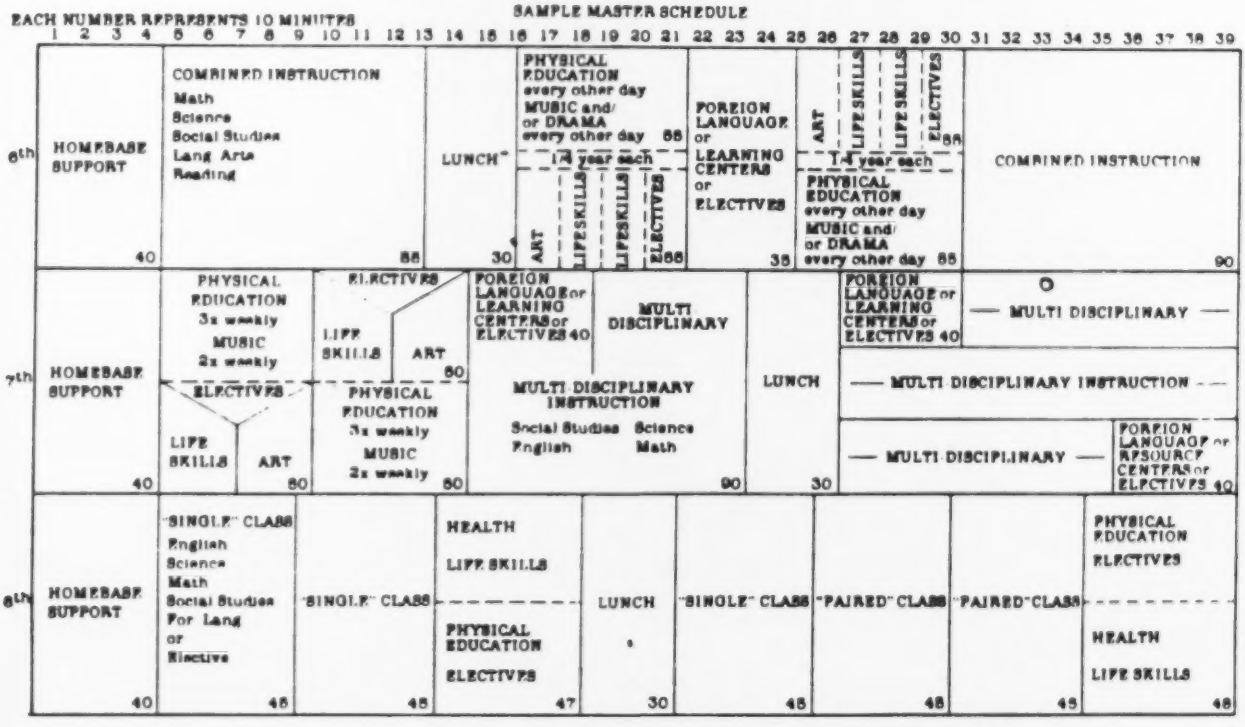
Figure 5.10
Block Schedule, Wheel Arrangement, Special Interest Classes (ERR)





Health and P E will switch at Semester
For 1st Semester an Aid will be assigned to Art Music or Health to balance the classes
In 2nd Semester 2 P E Teachers will balance the 6th and 8th grade classes

Figure 5.11
Block Schedule, Ten-Minute Modules



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Supplement:

Exposition on Teaming Activities

From **Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century: A report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents,** Carnegie Commission on Adolescent Development, 1989.

"Students and teachers are divided into teams. A team of teachers is assigned students. Teachers on the teams make all academic and organization decisions about who will teach which group of students when; how many periods of reading, mathematics, and other subjects there will be; and how long each period will last. The teachers adjust the daily schedule of classes frequently to accommodate instructional needs or special events.

"The most important task of the team is to coordinate instruction, typically organized for interdisciplinary approaches. Each instructor teaches some reading, writing and mathematics, regardless of his or her specialty. Students experience continuity in subject matter from class to class.

"Teachers have ample time for planning, an essential element in teaming. Teams meet nearly every day for about 45 minutes. At team meetings, the teachers agree on what skill to emphasize." (p. 39)

"One successful solution to unacceptably large middle grade schools is the school-within-school or house arrangement. Clearly named and marked areas within the larger building are designated for students and teachers assigned to a particular house.

"A house should contain 200 to 300 students but no more than 500. Students in the house would constitute a microcosm of the school population in ethnic and socioeconomic background and in physical, emotional, and intellectual maturity, allowing students to learn from each other about human diversity. Students should remain in the same house as long as they are enrolled in the school, and view themselves as graduates of the house as well as of the school.

"Schools-within-schools offer young adolescents a stable clustering of teachers and peers. The house creates the conditions for teams of teachers and students to coalesce, for the advisor and student to get to know each other, and for students to begin to form close associations with their peers." (p. 38)

" . . create teams of teachers and students who work together to achieve academic and personal goals for students. Teachers share responsibility for the same students and can solve problems together; often before they reach the crisis stage; teachers report that classroom discipline problems are dramatically reduced through teaming. This community of learning nurtures bonds between teacher and student that are the building blocks of the education of the young adolescent.

"Teaming provides an environment conducive to learning by reducing the stress of anonymity and isolation on students. Common planning by teachers of different subjects enables students to sense consistent expectations for them and to strive to meet clearly understood standards of achievement. Teaming creates the kind of learning environment that encourages students to grapple with ideas that may span several disciplines, and to create solutions to problems that reflect understanding, not memorization.

"Interdisciplinary teams also provide a much-needed support group for teachers, eliminating the isolation teachers can experience in departmentalized settings. Morale among teachers often increases significantly with team teaching." (pp. 38, 40)

Middle Level Education Survey

In the spring of 1988 the Middle Level Education Task Force administered a survey to all middle level schools in New Mexico. One hundred forty-one middle level schools were sent survey forms; eighty-six responses were received for a sixty-one percent (61%) rate of return. The survey results follow.

1. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the sixty-nine districts responding indicated that their school district had a statement of philosophy which addresses the specific needs of middle level students.

2. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the eighty-six schools responding indicated that their school had a statement of philosophy which addresses the specific needs of middle level students.

3. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the eighty-six schools indicated their class schedules allow for large blocks of time.

4. Thirty-four percent (34%) of the eighty-six schools indicated their teachers were organized into interdisciplinary planning/teaching teams at any grade level.

5. Of the thirty-six schools that indicated their teachers were organized into interdisciplinary planning teams, twenty-nine or eighty-five percent (85%) indicated that their teams shared common students and common planning time.

6. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the eighty-six schools responding indicated that they had a planned program for remediation.

7. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had a planned program for advanced students.

8. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had an exploratory program.

9. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had student choice of electives.

10. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had physical education for all students.

11. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had a planned guidance program.

12. Forty percent (40%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had a planned personal development program in the affective area.

13. Thirty percent (30%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had a planned classroom-based advisor-advisee program.

14. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had organized clubs.

15. Eighty percent (80%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had interscholastic activities.

16. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had a planned intramural program.

17. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that they had planned parent/community involvement.

18. Of the eighty-six schools responding:

    a Forty-one percent (41%) indicated that they were organized into grades six-eight;
    b. Fourteen percent (14%) indicated that they were organized into grades seven-nine;
    c. Twenty-one percent (21%) indicated they were organized into junior-senior high schools; and
    d. Seventeen percent (17%) indicated they were organized into other categories.

19. Of the eighty-six schools responding:

    a. Twenty-two percent (22%) indicated that they had an enrollment of 0-200;
    b. Twenty-one percent (21%) indicated that they had an enrollment of 201-400;
    c. Thirty-six percent (36%) indicated that they had an enrollment of 401-700;
    d. Fourteen percent (14%) indicated that they had an enrollment of 701-1,000; and

e. Five percent (5%) indicated that they had an enrollment over 1,000.

20. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that their teaching staffs would benefit from specific college courses in middle level education.

21. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the eighty-six schools indicated that the survey was completed by the building administrator.

22. Of the eighty-six schools responding:

    a. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of the administrators completing the survey had one-three years experience in their current positions;
    b. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the administrators completing the survey had four-seven years experience in their current positions;
    c. Fourteen percent (14%) of the administrators completing the survey had eight-twelve years experience in their current positions;
    d. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the administrators completing the survey had thirteen-seventeen years in their current positions; and
    e. Eight percent (8%) of the administrators completing the survey had eighteen or more years experience in their current positions.